



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

September 1-September 30, 2010

EDUCATION

Building Enthusiasm for Teaching among Young Afghans:

In remote parts of Afghanistan, it is difficult to find adults with the 12th grade education that the formal education system requires of its teachers. USAID's Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) helps to ensure that children in these underserved areas receive an education. PACE-A has worked with more than 3,000 remote communities to establish community-based classes and trained 3,100 people with less formal education to serve as their primary grade teachers.



High school students Wajiha and Wasia attended a PACE-A teacher training.

PHOTO: USAID/PACE-A

Besides subject knowledge, training programs provide teachers with pedagogical tools such as ways to incorporate no-cost local materials as teaching aids. Teachers and students alike are noticing the benefits of these innovative approaches, and the reputation of PACE-A training is spreading. Recently, when trainers arrived in Hirat Province, they found two young women who were not on the official list of participants among their group of expectant trainees. The women turned out to be students from a nearby high school who wanted to join the training as volunteers.

The young women almost changed their minds when they found that the training included both male and female trainees. However, they decided to stay, explaining, "Our enthusiasm and interest did not allow us [to leave], and we said we will join like other female trainees. We would like to attend this training to gain more knowledge, and we don't want any privileges for our participation." Other young people are also interested. "Every time, please consider [inviting] two to three students of higher grades to your training as volunteers," they recommended. A positive, if unintended, outcome of the PACE-A program seems to be inspiring enthusiasm for teaching among young Afghans!



Governor Akbarzada lays the foundation stone at Shahr-e-Kohna Middle School.

PHOTO: USAID/BESST

Schools Receive Grants Based on Community Prioritization:

The Education Stabilization Initiative, implemented through USAID's Building Education Support Systems for Teachers (BESST) project, provides grants to schools to improve education in Afghanistan's insecure areas. Grants are dispersed to communities that prioritize the needs of their schools and work with district or provincial Ministry of Education offices to solicit grant funding.

USAID/BESST grants finance the construction of school boundary walls, latrines, wells for clean drinking water, and refurbishment of school buildings to support positive changes toward stabilization.



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In August, BESST awarded a grant to Shahr-e-Kohna Middle School in Ghazni City for the construction of a boundary wall around the school grounds. On August 22, BESST held a groundbreaking ceremony to initiate the implementation of the grant. The governor of Ghazni Province, Mohammad Musa Akbarzada, laid the foundation stone of the boundary wall. The Provincial Education Director, a member of Afghan National Assembly, and community elders of Shahr-e-Kohna also participated. The Governor of Ghazni underlined the value of education and the importance of boundary walls for safety and security of both schools and students. He affirmed, "The only thing that can help improve a community is quality education; therefore, it is our responsibility to ensure a safe environment for education."

Recently, BESST has committed over \$100,000 USD to fund four of these kinds of grants for schools in Khost and Ghazni provinces. Relations between communities and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan are improved through the collaborative process of identifying community grievances and funding projects that respond to community needs.

USAID MPPA Student Hosts President Karzai at Afghanistan Civil Service Institute: As a senior instructor, Abdullah Kakar, Head of Research and a Senior Public Policy Instructor at the Afghanistan Civil Service Institute (ACSI), is responsible for training more than 4,000 civil service employees in Kabul and 12,000 civil service employees in the provinces on topics such as public policy, strategic planning, and good governance. Recently, Mr. Kakar was teaching a course on public policy to senior Afghan government officials when he received a surprise visit from President Hamid Karzai. President Karzai sat in on part of the training session and asked him questions about the importance of public policy in Afghanistan.



Abdullah Kakar presents a lesson on public policy to Afghan President Hamid Karzai at the Afghanistan Civil Service Institute.

PHOTO: Afghan Civil Service Institute

As Mr. Kakar recounts, "The President entered my class and asked, 'What are you teaching to these top public managers?' I said, 'Public policy.' He said, 'Look, I am your student, and I am sitting here on the chair. Please teach me about public policy.' When I explained using a PowerPoint presentation and answered his questions, he said, 'Your presentation convinced me perfectly' and shook my hands warmly."

Mr. Kakar, who is also a student in the USAID Master's in Public Policy and Administration program at Kabul University, is already applying the knowledge and skills that he learned in graduate school in his job as a senior trainer with the Afghan Government. He uses



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interactive teaching methods and has translated many of his MPPA course materials into Dari. These adaptations make the materials more accessible to civil service employees in the ministries and district offices. Mr. Kakar believes that education and learning are the keys to developing a professional and competent Afghan Civil Service that can meet the needs of Afghan people.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Celebrating Road Construction in Ghazni: On September 5, local officials and Ghazni community members celebrated the construction of the Ghazni to Gardez Road project with a ribbon cutting ceremony. "The Ghazni to Gardez Road is the most important project in the entire province," said Ghazni Provincial Governor Musa Ahmadzai at the event. "Roads are not just rocks and gravel: they pave the way for the development and growth of our region."

The 93-kilometer Ghazni to Gardez Road connects two of Afghanistan's most important provincial capitals. When completed in summer 2011, the paved road will reduce travel time between these cities from 4 hours to 1.5 hours, creating new trade opportunities and providing better access to essential services for local communities. In addition, the travel distance from Pakistan to Afghanistan's Ring Road will be reduced by 500 kilometers. In rural areas, new business opportunities are crucial for community prosperity and stability. A trader in Ghazni City said, "I buy my goods in Pakistan. Travelling on the Ghazni to Gardez Road has become much easier [already]. In the end our whole community will benefit from it."



Local officials and Ghazni community members celebrate the construction of the Ghazni to Gardez Road.

PHOTO: USAID/SPR-SEA

The road is funded by USAID as part of the Strategic Provincial Roads (SPR) project, which works with Afghans communities and Afghan construction companies to build high-quality roads across Southern and Eastern Afghanistan. Not only are local leaders and community members engaged in roads planning, but local construction companies are taking the lead in all aspects of the road building business, from design, planning, and project management to HR, finance, and management. In addition to Afghan-led road construction, the SPR project also has a community grants component that reaches out to Afghan communities located along the road. Strategic provincial roads create development corridors across Afghanistan, connecting some of the world's most remote and isolated communities to the region and to the world.



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DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Elders' Network Meetings Raise Awareness about Rule of Law:

USAID's Rule of Law Stabilization Program – Informal Component (RLS-I) project held several elders' network meetings in Kandahar City in early September. The meetings' purpose was to introduce elders to each other from several villages in the Arghandab District of Kandahar Province, and to introduce elders to the RLS-I project's future activities.

Separate meetings were held for men and women to ensure that elders of both genders could meet and discuss key issues openly. The men's meeting drew 130 participants and the women's meeting drew 65. The women's meeting particular was a success, especially since women sometimes encounter difficulty attending events that involve travel outside of their homes and villages.



Sixty-five women attended an elders' network meeting to discuss rule of law and community-based dispute resolution.

PHOTO: USAID/RLS-I

During both meetings, elders discussed strengthening community-based dispute resolution, and how their actions as elders and jirga members link to the formal justice sector. Many of the men remarked that this was the first time they had met together as elders from different villages. Many women said it was the first time they had ever attended such an event.



The DAB Head of Payments discusses the live operations of the Clearinghouse.

PHOTO: USAID/EGGI

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Afghanistan Clearinghouse Goes Live: On August 15, the Afghanistan Clearinghouse began live operations with participation of all 17 commercial banks. The Clearinghouse, operated by Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) and supported by all 17 of Afghanistan's licensed banking organizations, will serve as the central hub for the "bank-to-bank" interchange and settlement of low-value customer checks. Mir Aziz Baraki, Deputy General Director of Bank Operations for DAB, representatives of 14 licensed banking organizations, and members of the Afghanistan Banks Association attended the launch.

Designed and implemented by DAB, with technical assistance from USAID's Economic Growth and Governance Initiative (EGGI), the new Clearinghouse formalizes the exchange of checks and vastly improves the existing system of bilateral clearing between individual commercial banks. The previous lack of a formal clearing system often resulted in lengthy delays in the process of crediting individual accounts. With the launch of the new formalized



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clearance system, the banks have agreed to a next-day settlement of any check presented to the Clearinghouse, meaning that customers will receive credit for the funds within one day of presentation of the check. This improvement in the efficiency of the clearance process is expected to foster use and acceptance of checks by the private sector, perhaps increasing the flow of deposits into the banking sector. This system is a key step in the modernization of the payments system for Afghanistan as outlined in the Payments Roadmap adopted by the National Payment Council.

Gemstone Trainees Graduate: On August 25, the first group of gemstone cut-and-polish trainees graduated from the Gemstone Training Center in Jalalabad. USAID supports the training center through a Global Development Alliance with American Nuristani Imports International.

USAID is setting up regional gemstone processing facilities and training centers to help gem dealers and miners learn new techniques and meet international gemology standards. By building the skill and human capacity of the Afghan gemstone sector, USAID's Afghanistan Small and Medium Enterprise Development (ASMED) project is helping Afghanistan to maximize the economic potential of this important and highly lucrative industry.



Graduation ceremony at the Gemstone Training Center in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province.

PHOTO: USAID/ASMED



Newly hired interns participate in a two-day orientation session.

PHOTO: USAID/EGGI

Women In Government Internship Program Strengthens the Afghan Government's Program Budgeting:

Six "Women in Government" interns were recently selected for placement in various Afghan Government ministries to support program budgeting. These six interns will receive training in the basics of program budget methodology, and will also receive on-the-job mentoring as they assist their assigned ministries in the preparation of program budgets. Over time, the interns will take on additional responsibilities including providing training to government officials and conducting research and data reviews in support of budget preparation.

The Women in Government Internship Program, supported by USAID's EGGI, provides young women with work experience and the opportunity to learn functional knowledge relevant to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan or related entities. Their



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time with Afghan Government ministries will provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge to obtain long-term employment in the public or private sectors. To date, the program has hired 25 female interns to support the Afghan Government.

Attracting Investment to Industrial Parks: Foreign investors must have safe and adequate industrial locations at which to manufacture goods. To support a wide range of modern manufacturing processes, industrial parks require consistent electricity and water, access to roads from which to receive raw materials and send finished goods to market, and adequate security. The Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) currently manages industrial parks in Bagrami, Mazari Sharif, Kandahar, Jalalabad, and Hilmand that all feature prominently in its strategic plan to attract foreign investment.

On August 24 and 26, USAID's Trade and Accession Facilitation for Afghanistan (TAFA) project staff met with the Afghanistan Industrial Parks Association and AISA regarding technical assistance requirements to attract new business and expand existing ones. Most of Afghanistan's industrial parks, like the Bagrami Industrial Park, represent or house firms ranging in size from large textile companies employing 600 full-time workers and 2,000 temporary workers to smaller firms producing pharmaceuticals. In virtually every case, companies wish to export their goods, not just put them on the local market. However, to do so they require business development services to upgrade the quality of their products, improve management, reduce the cost of bank financing, provide vocational training to upgrade the skills of workers, and locate new external markets.

TAFA will coordinate this assistance in collaboration with other donors, and will take the lead role in setting up a donor coordinating committee for AISA to provide assistance to industrial parks in Afghanistan. This coordinated assistance will help ensure that textile businesses, like the one shown in Bagrami, continue to grow and expand their businesses, bringing new investment to Afghanistan.



A textile manufacturer at Bagrami Industrial Park.

PHOTO: USAID/TAFA



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STABILIZATION

Women Empowered to Generate Income for Their Families:

In September, 50 women graduated from a USAID-funded five-month “Fruit and Vegetables Processing and Basic Hygiene” training course in Paktya Province. USAID’s Local Governance and Community Development project conducted the course and provided culturally appropriate and highly valued vocational skills to the 50 women participants.

The curriculum included kitchen hygiene and food safety, purchasing safe food, cleaning chemicals, and food storage, as well as fruit and vegetable processing sessions. In addition to benefiting from the basic kitchen hygiene and food safety skills, the trainees are now able to play an active role in generating income for their families. As part of the training, the participants received toolkits that will help them sell their homemade fruit and vegetable products, such as jams and pickles, at local markets.



“Fruit and Vegetables Processing and Basic Hygiene” training course graduates receive their marketing toolkits.

PHOTO: USAID/LGCD

This project also helped strengthen linkages between provincial government officials and local communities, as the directorates of Women Affairs (DoWA), Economy, Labor and Social Affairs all played an active role by selecting trainees, monitoring the classes, and presenting graduation certificates to participants at the closing ceremony. DoWA involvement in this initiative also helped promote the role of women in the development of their communities. Ms. Halema Hazan, Paktya Director of Women Affairs, commented, “This and all other trainings for women are highly appreciated in the local communities and [the Afghan Government], and bring positive behavior changes in local communities.”